

## Southern Area Public Library Named “Best Small Library in America 2013”

The *Library Journal* and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have named the Southern Area Public Library (SAPL) the Best Small Library in America for 2013.

“It’s great to be recognized for our hard work,” said library director Mary Beth Stenger, who wrote the winning grant application. The award comes with \$20,000 to spend on anything in the library, plus money to send Stenger and one of her staff to the Public Library Association Conference in 2014.

To win “Best Small Library in America,” the Southern Area Public Library had to demonstrate accomplishments over time. “The Journal was looking for a library that had turned itself around,” Stenger said. “Since I took over in July, 2010, patron visits went from 3,000 to almost 8,000, an increase of 156%. Our computer usage increased 32%. Our programming increased 888%. We made a lot of changes that brought people in.”

The award looked at technology use as well. The library has an up-to-date website, a Facebook page, a Google calendar, and accounts with Twitter and Pinterest. “We stay involved online,” according to Stenger.

Demonstrating collaborative efforts was also important for the award. The library sponsors a different charity each month and invites patrons to make donations. In January, library volunteers created “birthday in a box” kits for children at the Clarksburg Mission. With the kits, homeless children in the shelter can “open the box and have a party.”

The *Library Journal* considered whether the library had features that other libraries can replicate. “We are the first library in the state to be part of the Geek the Library program,” Stenger said. Geek the Library creates awareness about library funding. “We’re hoping to get other libraries in West Virginia excited about that.”

Lost Creek, home of the Southern Area Public Library, is a Harrison County community of fewer than 500. The library draws patrons from neighboring communities and even other counties. The library’s collection of home schooling resources is one reason. “We have two shelves of home schooling materials that people can check out for a whole semester,” Stenger said.

The Southern Area Public Library is a fixture of Lost Creek and the surrounding area. “For a lot of people in the community, we are their home away from home,” Stenger said. “We have kids get off the bus here and spend the afternoon. We have snacks for them.”



## Scholarships for Spring Fling Available

Going to Spring Fling? Attending a workshop? Need money to attend? If you answered yes to any of these questions, note the [West Virginia Library Association's Continuing Education and Scholarship Program](#). If you have questions about the program, please contact Gretchen R. Beach, Catalog & Digital Services Librarian, [beachgr@marshall.edu](mailto:beachgr@marshall.edu), (304) 696-2312.

## Good Headlines the West Virginia Center for the Book's African American Literary Celebration

Over 75 people came to the Fagan State Theater in the Culture Center in Charleston on February 22<sup>nd</sup> to join poet Crystal Good for the African-American Literary Celebration, hosted by the West Virginia Center for the Book.

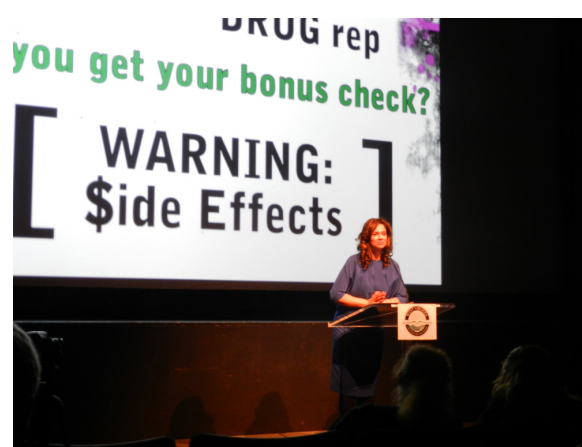
Jeff Biggers of the "Huffington Post" wrote that *Valley Girl*, Good's debut collection of poetry, "marks the entry of...an astonishing new voice into the national poetry circuit." He adds that the book "is a beguiling read, at once bold, disarming, plucky and feisty."

Good writes "through the lens of her experiences" as an Appalachian African-American woman and more. The former model and West Virginia native has worn many hats: poet, mother of three sons, and the current director of brand experience for Mythology LLC, a Charleston marketing firm.

Good is an Affrilachian poet, a term coined by Frank X. Walker to describe Appalachians of African descent. "I'm bi-racial, like President Barack Obama," she said. "I bring that experience to my work as well."

Good was joined by fellow Affrilachian poet Norman Jordan. "Jordan was here to support me," Good said. "That's something we do in the African-American community. We support each other." Good and Jordan sold their books at a post-event reception in the West Virginia Library Commission's James D. Waggoner Reading Room.

This event will be hosted again in celebration of African-American History Month in 2014.



Poet Crystal Good in the Fagan State Theater



Crystal Good signing her book in the James D. Waggoner Reading Room

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## Writer's Toolkit a Hit

In cooperation with the Division of Culture and History, the West Virginia Center for the Book again co-sponsored the Writers Toolkit 2013 at the Culture Center in Charleston on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The workshop was free and open to the public, and over 80 people attended.

The Writers' Toolkit workshop brings writers and potential writers together to share ideas. Morning and afternoon sessions give the authors time to present concepts and writing influences, with ample time for interaction. A midday Q&A session brings all the authors together to discuss the influences on their work. This year's theme was related to historical writing and was an event to celebrate the West Virginia Sesquicentennial. Authors presenting included Cat Pleska, Anna Smucker, Pete Kosky, and Robin Taylor.



Writers' Toolkit Panel Discussion

**In recognition of the Sesquicentennial, the Writer's Toolkit will also be repeated at Independence Hall in Wheeling on April 13<sup>th</sup>.** For more information about this session, contact Caryn Gresham, deputy commissioner for the Division of Culture and History, at (304) 558-0220. The West Virginia Library Commission and the Division of Culture and History are units of the West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts.

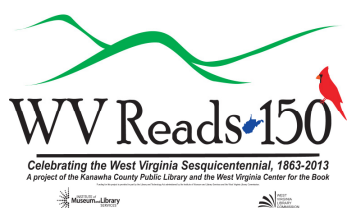
## Letters About Literature Numbers Grow

### LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

The annual state awards program for the national *Letters About Literature* (LAL) Competition is set for late May at the Culture Center in Charleston. The West Virginia Center for the Book, a unit of the West Virginia Library Commission, hosts this annual completion for West Virginia's students. This year, over 525 letters have been submitted by students in West Virginia Schools and are currently being judged at the state level.

LAL is a national reading and writing promotion program for young readers sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and presented in partnership with participating affiliate state centers for the book. Students are encouraged to write letters to authors who have inspired them. In 2012, West Virginia had its first national winner in Darius Attefat Peckham of Huntington.

## WV Reads 150 Sesquicentennial Celebration is Huge



Over seventy-two institutions, including public, school and academic libraries and bookstores are participating in WV Reads 150, a reading celebration of the West Virginia Sesquicentennial. Participants are encouraged to read 150 books during the 2013 Sesquicentennial Year, or join teams to do so. At last count, there were an estimated 300 teams in the state (with participants in other states), and over 2500 persons participating.

The reading celebration was the idea of staff at the Kanawha County Public Library. The West Virginia Center for the Book is running the program on a statewide level.



## Nominations Sought for CFTB Advisory Board

The Center for the Book is soliciting nominations for its first-ever advisory council. This council will be made up of seven persons appointed to staggered terms to provide counsel to Center staff in developing programs and services to promote the importance of books and reading and the state's literary heritage to audiences statewide. Meetings will be held online.

If you wish to nominate a person to serve on the Advisory Council, please submit theirs and your name, address, email contact, and a resume or discussion as to why this person should be appointed to John Paul Myrick, Center Director at [john.p.myrick@wv.gov](mailto:john.p.myrick@wv.gov).



## Geek The Library Takes Root in West Virginia

By Mary Stenger, Director, Southern Area Public Library

If you haven't heard of [Geek the library](http://www.geekthelibrary.org) yet, just hold on because you will be hearing a lot more about it in the coming months. "This campaign is designed to provoke conversation about the vital role that public libraries and librarians play in today's challenging environment," said Cathy De Rosa, global vice president of marketing for OCLC, a non-profit library cooperative which led campaign development and conducted a pilot campaign from June 2009 to April 2010. "We hope it will spark important community discussions about how public libraries can remain strong."

Southern Area Library in Lost Creek, WV is taking part in the national "Geek the Library" campaign to raise awareness about the importance of library funding support. The campaign highlights what people are passionate about and how libraries can support them, in an effort to heighten awareness about the critical funding issues public libraries face.

Our library is encouraging the public to talk about what they "geek"—whether it's engineering, superheroes, art or as one local patron said, "dressing up her cat!". The public awareness campaign illustrates the fact that everyone is passionate about something—everyone "geeks" something—and that the library supports them all.

The awareness campaign features in-library advertising, social networking elements, a Web site and grassroots community initiatives to draw attention to the need for increased library support. The campaign web site, [www.geekthelibrary.org](http://www.geekthelibrary.org), provides information about how people can get active and support their local library. "In conjunction with our Geek Launch, Southern Area Library has launched our Big Hearts Campaign," said Wilma Bennett, assistant librarian, "each month we highlight another charity to encourage patrons to be a part of their community because Southern Area Library 'geeks making a difference'.

"The great thing about Geek The Library is that the campaign gives even the smallest library the chance to create buzz and refine their public presence," said Mary Stenger, Director of Southern Area Library. "Another big plus is that it can be completely free for your library!" Southern Area Library's only investment has been a black piece of poster board and white markers along with in-house cost of printing some photos and informational brochures.

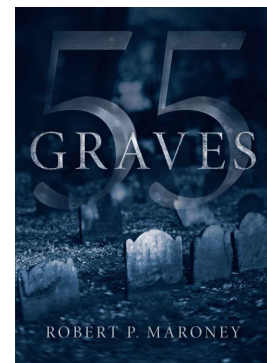
There are also monthly webinars that participating libraries can attend that help sharpen your marketing skills and more. The social media webinar was so valuable that it alone has made this a worthwhile venture for the library. If

you want to know more about the program, feel free to contact Southern Area Library at [mary.stenger@clark.lib.wv.us](mailto:mary.stenger@clark.lib.wv.us) or 304.745.4865. We'll be glad to share our experiences and help you to get started.

## Lunch with Bob Maroney, Author of *55 Graves*

Fayette County resident and author Robert P. Maroney will speak about his book *55 Graves* at the State Library Service J. D. Waggoner Reading Room on Tuesday, March 12. The event is open to the public.

*55 Graves* follows Detective Nicholas Pearce as he investigates two killing sprees that appear random on the surface. As Detective Pearce searches for the truth, he discovers a sinister and vicious group of killers who will destroy anyone that threatens to expose them.



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